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ABSTRACT

This spring 1998 issue of Renaissance Administrator features the following articles: (1) "Servant Leadership and Higher Education--What is Leadership?" (Richard E. Hasselbach); (2) "Teaching Writing in the 90's--Carnivorous Printers and Dying Grandmothers" (Helen Ruggieri); (3) Assignment--Journal Writing" (Lynn Muscato); and (4) "A Business Partner Speaks--Alcas Corporation" (Erik J. Laine). Hasselbach's article finds that "to know himself/herself sufficiently to lead, the value-laden leader must travel an inner journey of self-understanding and enlightenment." Ruggieri's article uses humor to discuss the challenges of teaching writing to college students. Muscato writes in her article, "This day takes me back to the falls that have been a part of my life, and I smile, outside as well as in my heart...Fall was a comfort to me--the time in my life to go to school." Laine's article provides a business owner's perspective on the skills that students should acquire before seeking to enter the workforce. (VWC)

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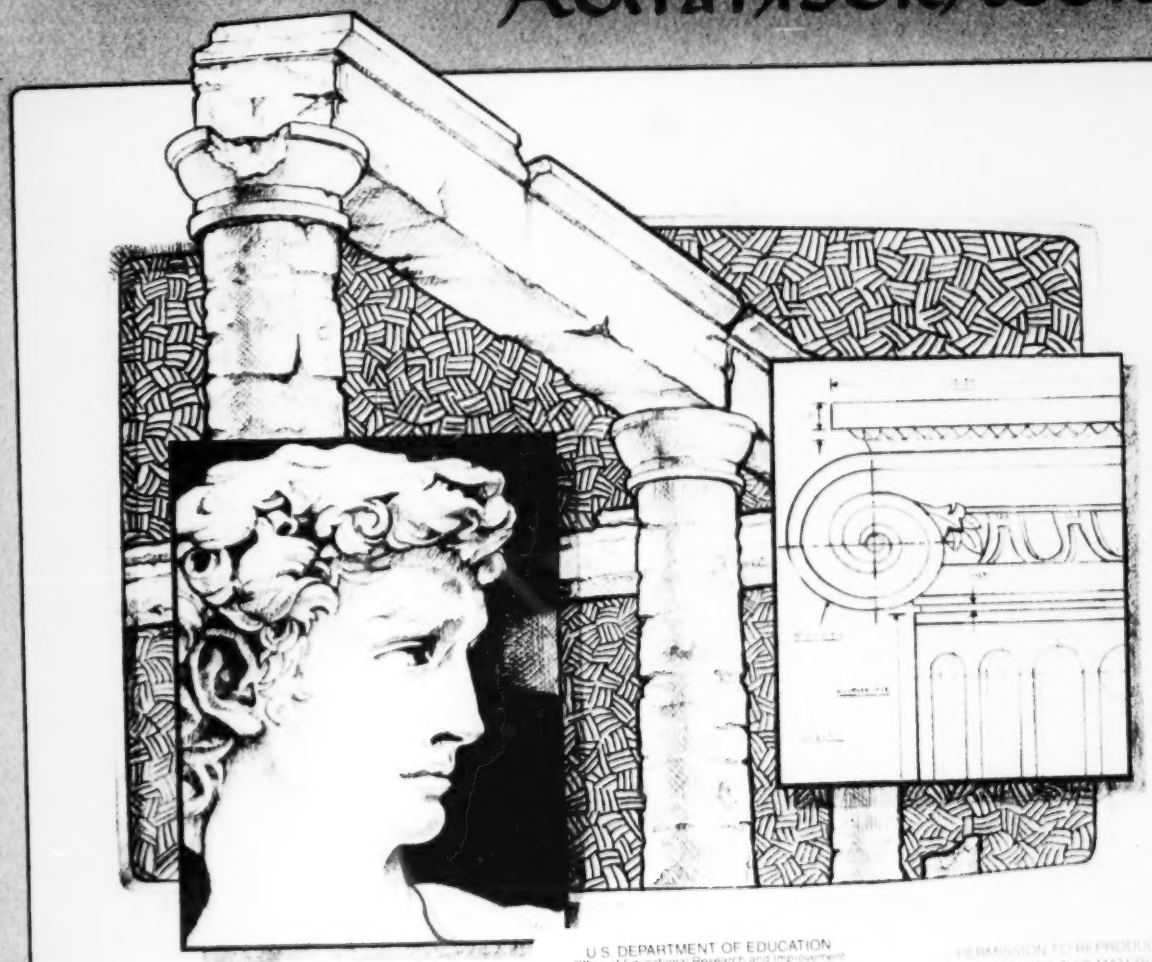
The Renaissance Administrator



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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
INSTRUCTIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

Leadership • Innovation • Advocacy • Development

Spring 1998

Dear NCIA Colleague:

Welcome to the premiere edition of *The Renaissance Administrator*. As educational leaders, we are charged with managing our responsibilities within the context of ever changing times. In this regard, we must view our responsibilities with "new eyes." This journal is being published to help us rethink and renew our priorities. Its purpose recognizes that honesty, integrity and equity are partners of leadership, innovation, advocacy and development -- the tenets of our NCIA organization.

Having served in an administrative capacity in both secondary and post secondary educational institutions for more than 25 years, I have had the occasion to share workplace experiences with friends and colleagues across the country. Regrettably, a common theme of this sharing has been a lack of civility, trust and equitable treatment. Through the insight presented within the pages of *Renaissance Administrator*, it is my sincere hope that our collective, spirited efforts will serve to reinforce the importance of modeling leadership behavior which appropriately reflects our NCIA values.

To cite a reference noted within this journal's lead feature article, "We must try to think in terms faithful to the complexity of our world. Our actions and decisions are interrelated in an intricate tapestry of connectedness." Won't you please join me in bringing to fruition this renaissance undertaking? Your contributions are key and most welcome. I will look forward to hearing your voice!

Yours in commitment,

Carol A. Scott

Carol A. Scott, Dean
Jamestown Community College
Cattaraugus Campus

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Because we consider education critically important, both to the corporation and to our community, we find ourselves supporting education in a variety of ways ... -- **Erik J. Laine, President/CEO**

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Renaissance Thinking

Servant Leadership and Higher Education

What is Leadership?

There seems to be a growing consensus that there is a leadership problem in our society (Gardner, 1989, Senge, 1990, Burns, 1995). A cursory glance at the newspapers indicates our political, social and cultural institutions face a dearth of true leaders at a time when rapidity of change makes leadership critically important to survival. Educational institutions need to take the lead in responding to the "leadership gap," attempting to equip the next generation with the leadership skills and attitudes needed to face the problems of the information age. Understanding leadership and how it is developed, then should be of crucial interest to educators.

Know Thyself

Leadership is easier to discuss then to define. One thing is clear, though, it is value laden. "When we call for leadership, we call for something we prize." (Heifetz, 1004, p.13). To understand leadership, we must identify and clarify those basic values by which leaders energize and engage their constituents and we must understand the values of the community itself. It is only in the context of values that the leader can galvanize a following and motivate it to act.

If leadership is value laden, potential leaders must be helped to discover and clarify their own values. In a scene from the movie *Moonstruck*, the character portrayed by Cher finds herself walking one evening with a man, and as they walk and converse, a chemistry is building between them. At last they reach his home, and he invites her to come in. Clearly, had she accepted his invitation, the friendship that had developed would have become more than a friendship. But Cher's character is engaged to another man, and so she turns down the offer. Her male companion is a bit surprised and presses her for a reason for her refusal. Why wouldn't she come in for just a little while? Her answer: "Because I know who I am."

A true leader -- a leader in the sense that Heifetz is speaking -- must know who he/she is. Leaders must know their core values and be able to continually clarify and develop them. Peter Senge, writing about the well-led organization (the learning organization) in *The Fifth Discipline*, discusses five habits (he calls them disciplines) that characterize well run organizations and their leaders. One of those disciplines is what he calls personal mastery. "Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision of focusing our energies, of developing patience and of seeing reality objectively." (Senge, 1990, p.7). For people who develop personal mastery, vision is more than a good idea -- it is a vocation, a mission from which they draw strength. And it is an essential characteristic of a leader.

To know himself/herself sufficiently to lead, the value-laden leader must travel an inner journey of self understanding and enlightenment. Perhaps this is one of the reasons there is a leadership crisis: one comes to leadership positions by extroversion, by living in the world of faction, and being in the center of affairs. But this active life may cause a person to neglect the inner life, or think of it as unimportant and not urgent. (Palmer, 1990). Indeed, Parker Palmer observes that training programs for leaders frequently stress developing management and tactical skills to the neglect of the skills need for the inner journey of self discovery -- a journey that runs downward and inward. (Palmer, 1990, p.7). To teach a student how to become a leader, one must of necessity teach the skills associated with personal spirituality. those skills, outlined in Bolman and Deal's book, *Leading with Soul*, are the classic spiritual techniques used in all religious traditions: prayer, meditation, spiritual direction and ritual (Hasselbach, 1997).

Leadership as Covenant Community

True leadership is also communal. Speaking in the context of the business organization, Max DePree maintains that leaders owe workers more than a mere contractual relationship. In the traditional employment contract, an employer owes his/her employee an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. While contractual relationships are not unimportant and cover such necessary details of the work relationship as hours, salary, benefits, working conditions, and job description, more is needed (DePree, 1989). *More*, according to DePree, is a covenant relationship.

Covenant relationships are more than legal; they are emotional and spiritual. The covenant relationship is borne of shared commitment to core principles and values. Covenant relationships are relationships of belonging and faithfulness. "Words such as *love, warmth, personal chemistry* are certainly pertinent. Covenant relationships are open to influence. They fill deep needs and they enable work to have meaning and to be fulfilling. Covenant relationships reflect unity and grace and poise. They are an expression of the sacred nature of relationships." (DePree, 1992, p. 60).

Moral Leader/Servant Leader

Authentic leaders desire to serve and make a positive difference in their communities. They place service in the center of organization; they are what Robert Greenleaf called "Servant Leaders." The principal goal of the servant leader is to meet the highest priority needs of all members of the community -- to create a communal environment where all the members will grown and reach their highest potential. Servant leadership is therefore inherently long term and transformational, to borrow a term from Burns.

The notion of Servant leadership is as old as the gospels:

> "A dispute arose among them about who should be regarded as the greatest. He said: Earthly kings lord it over their people. Those who exercise authority over them are called their benefactors. Yet it cannot be that way with you. Let the greater among you be as the junior, the leader as the servant."
> (Luke 2 24-26).

Nor is this purely Western or Christian notion. I recently had the occasion to discuss servant leadership with Aye Kyaw, the eminent Burmese scholar and expert on Oriental religions. Because the term was new to him, Aye asked what servant leadership was. I explained that it is leadership where the priority of the leader is to serve those led -- to help them grow and to see that their most basic needs are met. He lit up and said: "Ah, but this is Confucius." I must admit I was not surprised -- Greenleaf himself attributes the notion not to Luke, but to his reading of Herman Hesse's *Journey to the East*, and Hesse's writings were strongly influenced by Jungian psychology and Eastern religion (Greenleaf, 1977).

For Greenleaf, to be a true leader, one need be more than a powerful person who can get his or her agenda accomplished. Leadership has a moral component. It must be directional -- leading the community to something or someplace positive. Yet, how does one guarantee that leadership will always be positive. For Greenleaf, the answer was in the heart, in the motivation for the urge to lead. It was in the self-understanding of the leader as servant. The priority of service is the *sine qua non* of the moral leader. Those who seek to be servant leaders must begin with the notion of service; they must see themselves as fundamentally servants of the rest. Only out of this desire to serve, do servants, from time to time, assume a leadership role (Greenleaf, 1977).

Putting First Things First

Servant leadership is "rooted in the cultural value of improving the human condition for everyone." (Woodard, 1993, p.95). According to McComby, "leadership is serving and empowering people, building trust, facilitating cooperation, and explaining the significance of the individual role in the common purpose" (Woodard, 1993; McComby, 1979, p.20). To reach this goal, the servant leader must be willing to challenge society and its individual members to work together for the common good. Calling people away from vested self interest into altruistic care for others is not an easy task. It requires the ability to motivate -- to call forth the noblest and best of another.

The servant leader helps the community clarify its values. Values cannot be imposed -- they must be embraced. The servant leader is charged with the task of initiating and encouraging the valuing process. It is in discovering and articulating shared values that any community finds its strength and ability to work together. But, for values to be shared, they must be communicated and understood. More importantly, all members of the community must feel that they have had a part in the process of discerning values (Woodard, 1993; Senge, 1990).

Max DePree suggests that for the servant leader, there must be no outsiders. Every person in an organization has a right to be needed and involved in the work of the organization, and has a right to be cared about and to be understood -- to play a meaningful role in the community's life. Each person has a right to develop to his/her full potential. Finally, each person has a right to be given the opportunity to make a contribution -- to serve (DePree, 1989). In summary, the servant leader is motivated by the desire to make this dream a reality.

Characteristics of Servant Leadership

Larry C. Spears, the Director of the Robert K. Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership identifies 10 characteristics of Servant Leadership (Spears, 1994).

First, the servant leader listens. Servant leadership is not authoritarian. It is participative. The servant leader shares his/her authority with those led, and is open to the voices of others in clarifying the values, goals, mission, and direction of the community. Not only does the servant leader listen, he/she hears, and will be influenced by the input of those led. But there is another way that servant leadership listens. It listens to the inner voice as well. Servant leaders are reflective. They attempt to be in tune with the spirit within -- which is -- in fact, the source of their strength.

Second, the servant leader is empathetic. He/she accepts people as they are and attempts to know them from within -- what their needs are, what motivates them, what they hope for and dream of. In many traditional organizations, people are stifled because they are not allowed to use their gifts and talents in service of the organization's objectives. The role of the servant leader is to empower the gifts of each person by creating an institutional atmosphere open to diversity and meaningful cooperation (DePree, 1989).

Third, the servant leader is a healer. Healing and wholeness come from a common linguistic root (Senge, 1990). The servant leader heals by having a broad view -- by trying to see the whole. Senge urges his readers to develop the habit of "system thinking" (1990). By system thinking, he means, we must try to think in terms faithful to the complexity of our world. Our actions and decisions are interrelated in an intricate tapestry of connectedness. Structures of behavior underlie those connections which strongly influence outcomes. System thinking attempts to see the whole of the system so that when problems occur, they can be addressed in terms of the structure of our institutions where the most leverage lies. "By seeing whole, we learn how to foster health" (Senge, 1990, p.69).

Fourth, the servant leader is aware. He or she is committed to truth. This is also a critical aspect of what Senge calls "self mastery." They do not try to deceive others or themselves about current reality.

"Not only does deceiving ourselves about current reality prevent the subconscious from having accurate information about where we are relative to our vision, but it also creates distracting input to the subconscious, just as our "chatter" about why we can't achieve our vision is distracting" (Senge, 1990, p.165).

Fifth, the servant leader uses persuasion, not power, to achieve his/her end. The best of leadership is persuasive. Eisenhower once defined the essence of leadership as getting other people to do what needed to be done not because you told them to do it, but because they wanted to do it. Servant leadership is much like this -- it does not rely on the coercive ability. It hopes to build consensus by engaging followers meaningfully in the process of decision making.

Sixth, the servant leader is visionary. Out of his/her values comes a vision of what the organization could and should be.

Seventh, the servant leader has foresight. Servant leaders can see what Senge calls the near future. The future is a mystery -- but there are hints and symbols that give us good reason to intuit the near future from our experience of the past and present. Greenleaf speaks of growing edge people as those who are most in tune with the near future. These people, who are often vulnerable and eccentric, are prophets among us. The servant leader is sensitive to these people, struggles to identify and listen to them (Hasselbach, 1997).

Eighth, the servant leader is a steward. The servant leader realizes that leadership is a trust. It is not given for its own sake, nor is it for the aggrandizement or enrichment of the leader. It is for the betterment of the community. The servant leader must be faithful to the past, from which he/she has inherited a trust, and must be mindful of the future of the community to which the leaders legacy will be passed. With stewardship in mind, the servant leader will be generative -- will think of and prepare to transfer leadership to a succeeding generation of leaders (Bolman and Deal, 1995).

Ninth, the servant leader is nurturing, he/she is committed to the growth of people. For servant leadership, human beings have an intrinsic value beyond what they can do. With Kant, the servant leader believes that people are ends in themselves, and must never be treated as means to an end or objects to be manipulated (Gardner, 1989).

Finally, the servant leader builds community. He/she is a gatherer -- calling people out of isolation and self interest and into a growing and generative community. To do this, the servant leader must lead with vision, and invite others to share and refine that vision as a true community.

Teaching Leadership -- Why Colleges Are Getting Failing Grades

Leadership can be taught (Gardner, 1989). Unfortunately, schools which have been most successful in other efforts, have been ineffective in their efforts to develop leaders (Gardner, 1989). In part, Gardner blames the ineffectiveness of schools on their stress on developing narrow competencies. Schools produce experts and professionals. But in rewarding expertise and professionalism disproportionately, they fail to help leaders, who need to be broadly based generalists, to emerge.

A related problem, according to Gardner, is the fragmentation of knowledge into disciplines with no attempt to draw interrelationships between subjects. Because of this fragmentation, students fail to see how the courses relate to each other or to life (Burns, p. 243). They have little encouragement to look for ways to use the knowledge gained in the classroom in the larger arena of life. Yet intellectual and social isolation ultimately limits vision (Burns, 1995). In *College, the Undergraduate Experience*, Ernest Boyer challenges higher education to attempt to help students to achieve a more global, integrated perspective on their education, and out of it, to recognize their communal obligations (Boyer, 1987). But it was Wellington who said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. In other words, what students learned in school -- in the classroom and outside classroom -- had an important referent to the contributions that

those students will be making in their "real life." Robert Starratt reminds us in *The Drama of Schooling the Schooling of Drama*, that school is a time in which students need to experiment with the skills that they will need to make a meaningful contribution to the communities of which they will be a part (Starratt, 1990). As educators, we need to facilitate this experimentation process.

Leadership Programs -- What They Are and What They Could Be

Leadership education programs at many campuses are under the aegis of Student Affairs. Academic educators tend to be conspicuous by their absence from leadership programs (Burns, 1995), and indeed from all Student Life programs (Boyer, 1987). This is particularly unfortunate in the area of leadership development programming, which holds out the possibility of integrating the specific learning of the classroom with the more general skills of leadership, bringing theory and practice together in a setting where there can be reflection and growth.

One such program is in effect at Washington State University. Under the program jointly coordinated by the Department of the Student Affairs and the School of Education, the University offers a sequence of courses directly related to leadership and service. All courses, such as Communication, Leadership and Management, Leadership and Society, etc. are offered in the School of Education. In addition to the teaching aspect of the program, there is also a practice component.

Students not only learn about leadership theory, they have the opportunity to practice leadership skills through community involvement. Finally, the students are challenged to reflect on the meaning and significance of their leadership experiences (Burns, 1995). The focus of the Center is to develop student leadership skills along with a service ethic. Interestingly, the University's model seems to take for granted Greenleaf's notion of service as the *sine qua non* for leadership.

"Opportunities for meaningful service and serious reflection offer educational experiences that cannot be obtained in any other way" (Burns, 1995, Boyer, 1987).

Conclusion

If our institutions are to be wisely led into the next generation, and the next century, institutions of higher education will need to take a much more focused approach to leadership development of students. This education must acknowledge the normative nature of leadership -- that it is values based. Programs that merely provide training in the skills and techniques needed to manage and control others will prove inadequate and even damaging. Our future leaders must learn to value service. Opportunities to link academic disciplines and service to the community are key. Systematic reflection on the significance of that service will prove the most valuable tool in equipping tomorrow's leaders with the skills and attitudes they will need to lead with vision and compassion. Only with such skills will they be able to navigate toward a better world ❑

About the Author -- *Richard E. Hasselbach is the Executive Assistant and Counsel to the president of the Borough of Manhattan Community College. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education at Fordham University where he served as legal counsel from 1995-1997. He holds a Juris Doctorate degree from Boston College Law School, a Master of Divinity degree from Washington Theological Union and a Bachelor of Arts degree from Siena College.*

For more information about references cited in this feature, you may write to the author in care of this publication.

Renaissance Administrator
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From the Instructional Tool Box
Humor . . .

Teaching Writing in the 90's

carnivorous printers and dying grandmothers

I teach writing -- a dying art. Sometimes I feel as if I only go through the motions. I try to convince the students that writing is an important skill, that you can make a living as a writer, translating information from oral nothings into exact words, sentences, paragraphs which convey meaning. I try to tell them that communication is the basis of community, that clear writing is clear thinking, that an educated person should be able to say exactly what she or he means.

Students say, why bother when the finished piece can mean anything anybody wants it to mean. After all, the reader determines the meaning. I begin to grind my molars. Another semester has begun.

I think I may be fighting the last ditch fight. I think maybe its of no use. There's no sense teaching anyone to write when they can buy a Hallmark card to state their deepest feelings and thoughts and in rhyme too.

There's no sense teaching anyone to write when we have phone companies competing for those dialing dollars. No need to write when you can send flowers. No need to write when the post office will probably never get it delivered anyway. No need to write when you can send away for a paper probably much better than the one you could write yourself and on any topic. No need to write when you can borrow somebody else's paper and probably get a better grade. No need to write when you don't have anything original to say. No need to write when everything important has already been said.

Writing used to be a highly regarded skill. If you could read and write in England of the Middle ages, you could claim right of clergy if you'd been sentenced to hang and escape the gallows. People who could read and write were considered too valuable to waste in a hanging.

That's what universal education does for you. W. H. Auden defined a teacher as someone who talks in someone else's sleep. You've certainly looked out over that 8 o'clock class at all those nodding heads and wondered why you go through the motions. It's bad management. The way we've organized the education system is grossly inefficient. We could hire one teacher to make a video and sell tapes. That way all anyone would need to go to college would be a VCR and a computer modem (but we'd still have to give them tests, wouldn't we?) We could save billions in building costs and teacher salaries. We'd only need one teacher to make the original tape, and we could pay him or her royalties -- no salary. Perhaps there would be competing videos for Composition One. The students could pick the one they liked best -- the one that matched their learning style. Then, if they fell asleep, they could just rewind and replay. This saves wear and tear on the teacher.

Teaching writing does have some benefits that I would be reluctant to give up, though. There are some great opportunities to indulge sadistic tendencies. If you aren't sadistic when you start teaching, you will soon be. There's something about the way students lie to you, badly, consistently, their smiling ingratiating little faces about to tell you why their paper will be late.

The excuses for late papers used to be my dog ate it, my brother crayoned on it. Now you get excuses like the printer ate it or it's done, but I just can't get it to print out. Here's my disc even if you can't read it on your machine. You suggest the troubleshooters in the computer science department. They claim they've already been there. A whole new body of excuses has now become part of the canon.

as eight grandparents, blaming it on divorce and remarriage. One student, a real wise guy, you know the type, never comes to class and then blames you because you scheduled it at 8 a.m. Sleeps when he does come. Asks twelve questions when he's there and awake because he wants you to know he's there. Stops after class to tell you how much he enjoyed your lecture on subordination. It's always his grandmother who passes away. I love to toy with him. "Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that," I say. "What was it? Cancer? Heart? Was she your mother's mother or your father's?" If he passes that test without faltering, I ask, "Please, give me your mother's address. I'd like to send her a card." It brightens my day to watch his face. Niceness used as a weapon.

Being a teacher prepares you for rejection. You learn that no one really likes you and that students are only nice to you because they are trying to butter you up. After the class is over they don't even acknowledge your presence. So with this going for you, getting a rejection from an anonymous editor is no problem.

Not only does being a teacher prepare you to be rejected and make you boring even if you weren't to start with, it can make you an encyclopedia of social problems. One set of research papers can supply you with enough statistics and case histories of anorexia nervosa, steroid abuse, Alzheimer's, AIDS, and assorted other illnesses to make you a sparkling conversationalist at any party. You can butt into any argument filled with facts.

You can cite statistics on gun control, marijuana use, cocaine abuse, incest, child abuse, alcohol abuse. And when you're tired of these tried and true topics someone will come up with a new one -- the chemical composition of acid rain or DNA fingerprinting where you surge through mounds of diagrams of what appear to be fish eggs in a string. And just when every shred of logic you thought you had is ripped like peeling skin from your back, a student working as a nurse's aide comes up with a paper on bedsores. Where else could you get to read material like this?

When you recover from the litany of social problems, when you rise up out of the depression of reading fifty or so papers on the ailments and abuses of mankind, written in sentences that have to be read twice at least to be comprehended, when you recover from paragraphs that go one for three pages, and conclusions that stop on a dime, you blink four or five times to refocus your vision.

Standing in your doorway is a student with a fifteen-page paper on the battered-wife syndrome. You forgot you'd given her an extension because she had a particularly sad story about being a single mother and having her right arm broken by an abusive boyfriend who stole her car and all her clothes after beating her up with a broom handle. She shows you the welts across her back before you can stop her.

On the first page there are three sentence fragments plus pronouns multiplying in a confusing welter of one's and they's and its. Grades are due in an hour. What are your options? Giver her an independent study next semester in your one free hour and file an incomplete? Fail her? Introduce her to the guy with all the grandparents?

Sometimes you don't want to be a sadist and you can't find any out for yourself. Well, this is what you get the big bucks for, right? Be firm. Remember that if her grade point average isn't above 2.0, they'll get rid of her and/or she'll lose financial aid. Remember the abusive boyfriend who doesn't want her to go to college. Remember, he told her she'd fail.

So what if she stays. So what if she learns to write. What will writing do for her? It will allow her to name her problem and once it has a name -- who knows how far she can go with it. She has learned how to do rudimentary research, how to use a computer, and how to group like information together. With that to work with, she can do what she has to. Not everything is funny, but she has always laughed at your jokes, and you only ate lunch in that free period anyway. And if there's one thing you can live without, it's lunch.

Do you think this will convince a student that six credits in composition are a reasonable requirement for a college diploma? Perhaps. But writing is intricately connected with how we think and the process of naming and organizing.

It has to do with making connections between what's out there and what's inside us. It has to do with recognizing those connections and adapting them. I for one can't think without a pencil or a piece of chalk in my hand. That's what universal education does for you ❑

***Helen Ruggieri** is an adjunct teacher of composition at Jamestown Community College, Cattaraugus County Campus. This piece appeared originally in the* Palo Alto Review.

Keeping a Humorous Perspective on Instruction

☺ Language

While discussing the teaching of English, several of my colleagues and I talked about how we love language and the power and fun of words. But as English professors, we also discovered that we stop often while reading our students' work to think about and even ponder their somewhat creative use of language.

In one essay, a student wrote, "My boyfriend takes me for granite." Of course, my swift pen marked *wrong word*. But then I thought, "Hmm .... perhaps he does take her for a hard, cold stone. Is this a new way to describe a "bitch"?

Through the years, I have come across several other interesting uses of language. A paper on euthanasia started, "When I walked into the room, the man was lying in a comma." (No doubt possible). A student described his father as an "earless journalist." (Must make his job even more difficult.) Then there was, "I can only hope she escapes the miser of her life." (I hope so, too.) This next one both startled and amused me. "He ejaculated across the table," -- a noble physical feat no doubt. And in a recent essay on AIDS, a student wrote, "With more education, the virus won't spread so quickly." (If only this were true.) **--Charlotte Cappellini**

☺ Career Aspirations

I was representing the Sheriff's Academy and the profession of Law Enforcement during a recent Career Day event. A student approached and informed me that he was interested in attending our Academy. "That's wonderful! What are you planning to do after you graduate?" In all seriousness, he informed me that his supreme goal is to go to work with the FBI and ultimately, to be assigned to investigate the "X-Files." (The future of our youth sometimes scares me.) **-- Chuck Holder**

☺ Meeting Schedules

I have a pressing need NOT to meet, but don't take it personally. I'm spending so many hours working that the Vet just put one of my cats on Prozac to treat behavior problems related to cat neglect! (I'm not making this up.)
-- Bonnie Allesi-Barker

☺ Puzzling Responses

When a student in the learning lab wanted to let the director know how disgusted she was with an assignment, she wrote, "Meanless to say, this is not important." Another student wrote, "My father is a cleaver man." A student in an Intro to English class wrote, "I always wanted to earn an Olympic metal." A student in a literature class wrote this description, "I watched the mussels in his neck move as he talked.
-- Charlotte Cappellini

Renaissance Instruction

Assignment -- Journal Writing

Professor Charlotte Cappellini, Jamestown Community College, Olean, New York -- This past fall, students were asked to walk through city of Olean, record their observations, and write in their journals memories which may have been triggered as they experienced the sensations of fall in Olean.

The air is crisp and cool, the leaves are most festive in their array of colors. I have always looked forward to this time of the year. The predictable changes comfort me; the beauty astounds me; and the cooler air refreshes me. As I walk through the leaves, they crackle. They fluff up and some, caught by the wind, whirl around me like confetti snow in those glass globes with the winter scenes inside. Oh, this is wonderful though; yes, just like a child, like a child that I should have been, but could not be. I am enjoying the walk on this beautiful day. I am enjoying this day without fear.

This day takes me back to all the falls that have been a part of my life, and I smile, outside as well as in my heart. I remember what great relief, I felt as a child as I went back to school each fall. All summer I longed for the day that I could return to school. School was a safe solace away from my brutal life at home. On the way to school each fall morning, I skipped happily through the leaves, enjoying the crackle and my liberation. Though I must have also walked home, I do not remember doing so. Fall was a comfort to me -- the time in my life to go to school.

Safely sitting at my desk, she could not hurt me. There would be no pain. I was not a good student. Oh no, I was too shy, too scared. I had a horrible secret. This secret kept me a prisoner from everything, from everyone, but most of all from myself. I shut myself up. I tried not to talk. I tried not to think. Thinking made me cry. Crying often brought me another beating. Talking might allow some part of my secret to slip out and another beating might follow.

As a child, I was only a fragment of who I was capable of being. My smile faded with these dreary memories. My stomach churned and the deep, dark pain from my past swept over me, drowning out the beauty of this moment, this walk and this fall.

"It is "okay," I shout to myself. I shake myself as I remember that all of that horror is over, long gone and far away. No! I can no longer be hurt. I will not allow it. My knowledge of this brings my smile back. This time, even brighter than before. The blazing colors reappear with the same glorious freshness of first sight. I nod to myself.

I am pleased to be here; pleased to be free. I am child like. I know this and I rejoice in the feelings. I want to giggle and laugh while running, skipping and jumping through the leaves. I want to roll in them and throw them into the air. I want to yell at the top of my voice for everyone to hear -- "I am alive. I made it out of my prison. The monsters cannot get me. I'm safe, I'm sane and I'm here! And like the bonus to beat all bonuses, I'm in school again -- in the fall of 1997 and in the fall of my life.

This fall, this marvelous fall, I am free to be me or at least free to continue learning to be me. My classes, my professors and my fellow students all teach me so much. I can learn. I am so amazed at myself. She lied. I am not stupid. My grades have been excellent. There is so much to learn about this world and the people in it. I know that I cannot possibly learn everything, but I want to. School is wonderfully invigorating.

No longer am I afraid. No longer do I hide. I thought I would be safer if I did not have to experience anything. The anythings? They are the many things that trigger the horrible flashbacks. Hiding did not work. Being in the open does work. Someone

special taught me this. No longer will I limit myself to a fragment of self or a fragment of life. Instead, I will rise and grow whole.

So now I can look at the leaves and ponder the numbers, the colors and the differences in all of them. And I think of my life and of myself and of everything awaiting me -- so much to learn and too much to count.

How will it all color my life? What differences will the knowledge bring me? This I cannot comprehend, but I can feel the anticipation and excitement pound inside me. This fall, this school (college, wow!), this fascinating diversity, these professors, students and all of these books are here taking me, swirling me like a leaf on my most wonderful adventure. The adventure of learning and growing to be a new me -- happier and healthier. The wonder of it all is yet to be.❑

__Lynn Muscato__ agreed to share her private writing. She is a 45-year old college student and thrice-widowed mother of four children.

THE PRIVACY

Some Harvard behavioral psychologists said they wanted to come and watch me while I wrote a poem. And I said, My God, I'd rather have you come and watch us have sex than have you watch me writing a poem.
-- Maxine Kumin, Interview, 1992

Sometimes you're absolutely sure
you've lost it, certain you will not write
again, never drive home in a car leaning
your head around the traffic,
fingers shaky with the rendezvous,
impatient with that knowing,
getting edgy, flaky inside because

something's in there, in there
like an alien rooting in the slippery
gears at the base of the neck, it's in there
and you want to get it out
before it turns on you and snakes down
your back to fan through your major organs,
becoming arthritis, or up through your brain
where it comes out your mouth
as the gut-sucking truth you never meant
to utter there in the kitchen,
and now it's too late, everything's
different forever because
you didn't get home in time,
before the poem turned mean.

From *Koyaanisqatsi*, a collection of poems by Diana Hume George

TO YOU, WHO HAVE BEEN AFRAID TO LIVE

For at least ten years you have been preparing
to feel comfortable here in your life,
not a shutdown but a slowing of pace,
a grace of peace, of stopping on your way
through rooms of your dailiness to touch
the woven basket, the cobalt vase, walking
through the evening park without voices
intoning from the trees, *you must, you must* --
these same dreams since you were very young.

and you feel, have felt for years,
that this is how you most would live,
deliberate, considered, easeful, slow,
if your life will only let you,
which it won't, and this last decade
you have been yearning toward it, plotting,
pages spread wide, this cup, the open door
letting in late September air;

and for these many years no one
would have mistaken you for reckless,
you have been tame, habitual,
you pay your bills, perform your rituals,
the kitchen counter wiped before bed, and although
you know how to laugh
deep down your throat, still
you do not stay up all night
doing foolish things, for the fear of mothers
wishing sons and daughters safe in the night
urges unspoken in every pulse,

and it is here, when against your careful plan,
your life has somehow upended itself
months ago, or a year, or more,
when the muse has thrown up in your sink,
the walls you lean against weave and go soft,
when the one you've loved for years becomes
an alien whose language you don't know,
unmelodic, the syllables harsh,
the face not familiar, the only thing
you recognize in his stunned eyes
the same dull surprise you feel
(who let this stranger in the door?),
when every earned expectation
is foreclosed and getting through to the end
of each day is a relief that can still
amaze you, so weary are you
with the pulse of loss, and loss, and loss,
and blame, and pain, and guilt,
when these are all the certainties you know,

it is now that you find yourself on a beach
in the moon of spring, transfixed on your back
by a helicopter passing over,
a thing you would not have thought interesting
last year, let alone likely,
and for hours you lie there discussing
how such a sight might strike one innocent
of technology until that moment,
and your bones ask themselves to be innocent
of technology, and of blame, to seek
curiosity in the folds of its fear,

and this is when you are running,
and don't know how it can be happening,
to the mysterious playground at dusk,
losing your shoe, tripping but not falling,
turning on a carousel pushed by people
you are inexplicably playing with,
whose shadows break the skyline as you turn,
and you like them, they are good company;

and this is when on hands and knees
you crawl through caves with maps and flashlights
and swaydance in blues bars,
your head thrown back
on its graceful, thoughtless stem,
hair soaked in its own good sweat,
and hike the shores of rivers
seeking places to make love standing up,
your back bare against the buttress,
a quiet man coming solid inside you,
you can feel the cool stone with every steady stroke,

and you stay up until five,
winedrunk with this red-haired woman

your son's age who sounds as old as you are,
has seen things you have not, she is your peer
because she is just starting and so are you,
there is nothing you can teach her
and you are leaning into each other's laughter,
leaning into dawn, ankles twined easy,

and you do things not familiar and forgotten,
but what you have never done,
and no one you love is dying of what
you do, for though they may say
you have wrecked their lives, you doubt it,
at first you feared it but the days
go by and till they live, as you do,
one football, one elongated gesture
at a time, it is all you can do,

and sleepless for a second night,
you allow yourself to be driven
to the lit airstrip by the railroad tracks,
just beyond planes landing on the runway,
and you wade in the core of night
through high reed-grass to the tracks
and wait for trains, standing so close
that the power passes into your legs as
the cars speed through you, steady and straight,
sparks igniting the tracks
where your lover has placed the coin
so that when the train goes by
he can place in your hand this September night,
still warm from the tracks,
a smooth and glowing talisman,

and the trains come fast on each other now,
and you lie in the grass much too near
the tremored tracks and let
the thunderous machines rip your trunk,

and when the Lakeshore Limited comes by
you wave your moondrenched hand,
all alive with that power, wondering if anyone
is awake at windows of the coach cars
unable to sleep, watching the land
smooth by, wanting to know who you are
there in the night waving at a train
on the outskirts of a dying city,
you remember seeing such people
from your own seat in the train
at midnight junctions in Utah, in Nevada,
the strange ones who come
to the tracks to wave at trains
in the unreal neon night, hello, hello,
and all of this happens
only when your life slashes
its own skin, tears out its organs
still pulsing in amazed betrayal, gnaws them
into a hundred misshapen hunks
you'll never find in this high grass.

Nearing dawn you feel one of those moments,
fewer now, when the keening wind
of loss blows, the dark and awful bird
that folds asleep inside you wakes,
flap its great wings once,
slow and black and terrible,
and then, oh miracle, is gone,
leaving a silence into which you emerge,
feeling possible, and very quiet,

and it is now, for the first time
since you hurled your life out your own front door,
you're not afraid of what you'll dream, asleep,
deeply and well loved as you shall be ❑

Diana Hume George *is professor of English and Women's Studies at the Pennsylvania State University at Erie, the Behrend College. She is a poet, essayist, editor and scholar who has published numerous works. She holds BA and MA degrees from the State University of New York and a Ph.D. from the University of Buffalo. Dr. George has received numerous awards for excellence in teaching and research.*

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Partnership Perspectives

A Business Partner Speaks -- Alcas Corporation

Our company, Alcas Corporation, manufactures and markets CUTCO Cutlery, a high quality line of kitchen and sporting cutlery. Because of its exceptional performance characteristics and the special care that goes into its manufacture, we confidently identify it as "the world's finest cutlery." Our factory and headquarters are in Olean, a small community (20,000 population) in western New York. We started here in 1949 and in 1999, we'll be celebrating our 50th anniversary.

In the last 10 years particularly, we've grown very rapidly. Our CUTCO product is distributed across all 50 states and Canada. Over the past several years, we have launched an international marketing activity with marketing operations now in Australia, Korea, Germany and Costa Rica. Our worldwide sales last year were in excess of $400 million.

Because we consider education critically important, both to the corporation and to our community, we find ourselves supporting education in a variety of ways within the Olean community. We have a partnership with an area grade school. We have for many years provided an outstanding teacher award to area schools. And we try to be generous supporters of Jamestown Community College and St. Bonaventure University.

Our close involvement with the local school systems brings us into frequent contact with principals and superintendents of area schools and they often ask, "What kind of preparation, what kind of course can we best provide our students to ready them for employment by a company like yours?" This, of course, is an important question and we have deliberated considerably over the appropriate answer. The answer we have come to and regularly give is: "Prepare them to go to college."

The significance of this response is the high school curriculum is hard pressed to provide adequate preparation for immediate entry into today's business or industrial world. With the rapidly increasing complexity of today's factory operations, office systems, computer systems and communications networks, some level of college work is now necessary to make an entry at all!

In our company, we have had high school graduation as a minimum requirement for many years. But in the last five years in particular, we have been selecting virtually all of our entry level positions with a strong bias toward candidates who have completed at least some associate degree study. The reasons for our conscious move to up the educational ante for entry into our company are:

❶Today's workplace requires skills not covered adequately in high school. Skills such as:

- Technical proficiencies (computers, information systems, control systems)
- Communications skills (ability to write a cogent paragraph and a well structured letter, speaking skills, listening skills)
- Basic management and people skills (sense of teamwork concepts, an understanding of motivational issues, some level of leadership and management skills training)

❷We have a strong company policy aimed at "promotion from within." This applies to supervisors and technicians in the factory as well as to administrative supervisory and management positions. A high school education simply is not adequate for such positions. Whereas a two-year degree provides an excellent foundation for advancement.

❸We find that generally today's high school graduate is really "too young" to make a successful

entry into the business or corporate world. A two-year degree program, in addition to the knowledge and skills it provides, is an excellent vehicle for the maturing process. Those extra two years -- in a structured and demanding environment -- increase confidence levels and prepare people for undertaking responsibilities to an extent not normally seen in a high school graduate.

❹Having the basic two-year degree provides an excellent platform from which to go to a four-year degree. We have a strong and supportive tuition aid program and encourage employees to advance their job-related preparation, particularly those who have management aspirations.

❺Finally, we find that attendance at a two-year college is a marvelous self-selector for us in terms of personal characteristics such as initiative, motivation and responsibility. The willingness to make the commitment to preparation is a great "separator" of those who are going to succeed an those who will not.

Obviously, from the points I have made, we, at Alcas Corporation are grateful to have Jamestown Community College right here in Olean. We have a superb working relationship with the administration and faculty of JCC and find them enormously cooperative in tailoring specific management programs we need from time to time. Without hesitation, I say that JCC has been a significant component of the success we've experience in the last 10 plus years. I tip my hat to the college in gratitude.❑

Erik J. Laine *is President and CEO for Alcas Corporation, headquartered in Olean, New York.*

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